

the operators of private airlines/companies?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SH. C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) Some of the private airlines have defaulted in payment of Inland Air Travel Tax (I.A.T.T.) dues owed to the Government.

(b) Total outstanding dues pending recovery from private airlines as on 13.5.1997 is as under:

I.A.T.T. dues	-	1851.34 Lakhs
Interest	-	921.10 Lakhs
Penalty	-	1500.08 Lakhs

(c) and (d) Seven aircraft were detained in the past for recovery of I.A.T.T. dues. Out of these, five aircraft were released by the Customs Department after payment of the outstanding dues by the operators. One of the aircraft which was detained in November, 1996 was released on the basis of an interim order of the Delhi High Court, on deposit of security fixed by the Court. Action is taken as per law against the airlines defaulting in payment of I.A.T.T.

[Translation]

#### Expansion of Airport Near Abu Road

6323. SHRI PARASRAM MEGHWAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether any scheme for expansion of airport near Abu Road is under consideration of the Government to connect Mount Abu, an important tourist place of Rajasthan, with air service;

(b) is so, the time by which the work is likely to start on this project; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (c) The airstrip near Abu Road belongs to the State Government of Rajasthan. Airports Authority of India has no plans to upgrade this airstrip.

[English]

#### Post Office Manned by Private People

6324. SHRI BHIMRAO VISHNUJI BADADE: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether post-offices in rural areas are run by private people;

(b) if so, the number of post offices in the Kopergaon parliamentary constituency which are run by private people;

(c) the monthly amount of salary given to such people;

(d) whether there is any scheme to run such post offices on full-fledged basis; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) No. Sir. No post office is run by private people. They are either manned by Departmental employees of Extra-departmental employees who are appointed by the Department.

(b) to (e) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

#### Accounting Rates on Telecommunications

6325. SHRI CHANDRA BHUSHAN SINGH:

SHRI RAM SAGAR:

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV:

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

SHRI G.A. CHARAN REDDY:

SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO:

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) has asked the Government to drastically reduce International accounting rates on telecommunication;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government in the matter;

(c) whether India's stand has been made clear before W.T.O.; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Federal Communication Commission has proposed certain bench marks of Settlement Rates to be complied within four to five years.

(b) The Govt. have responded to Federal Communication Commission's Notice of Proposed Rule Making as follows:

(i) Under the provision of ITU, the principles of accounting rates are decided in multilateral forum and the accounting rates are negotiated bilaterally within their frame work. FCC does not have jurisdiction to impose changes in International accounting rates unilaterally.

(ii) The high outgoing traffic from US is the result of marketing strategies adopted by US carriers.

(iii) The methodology of setting the Bench Marks does not take into account the ground realities prevailing in India and is inappropriate.

Since the cost of termination of calls is higher in developing countries as compared to developed countries,

the division of accounting rate needs to be on non 50:50 basis.

(c) Federal Communication Commission's Notice of Proposed Rule Making suggesting reduction in the International Accounting Rates was a general notice addressed to all countries of the World and this notice was not routed through W.T.O

(d) Does not arise.

#### **Sapphire Mines in Jammu and Kashmir**

6326. SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether sapphire mines of Padder area of Doda district in Jammu and Kashmir are in a bad state of affairs;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government propose to exploit costly sapphire from these mines;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether the Government propose to entrust this ask to some Central agency; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (f) As per information available, the State Government of Jammu and Kashmir had appointed one NRI Shri Laxman Rawat in 1988 as sole agent for exploitation of sapphire deposits and J.K. Minerals Ltd. (a State PSU) entered into an agreement with him for the purpose. However, the Central Government did not approve this arrangement. Meanwhile M/s Golden Films and Finance Ltd. filed a writ petition in Jammu and Kashmir High Court against the appointment of Shri Rawat. Further action can be taken by the State Government after the case is decided by the Hon'ble High Court.

#### **Improvement of Railway Transportation in Darjeeling**

6327. SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether the Government are considering to improve Railway transportation in Darjeeling, West Bengal;

(b) If so, the details thereof; and

(c) If not, the reason therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) It is planned to provide 3 new narrow gauge locos for introduction on this section. 18 new coaches have already been pressed into service.

(c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

#### **Inoperative Airports**

6328. SHRI KASHIRAM RANA:

SHRI AYYANNA PATRUDU:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether number of airports are lying inoperative for the last three years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the number of airports out of them made operational so far?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) During the last 3 years 27 airports were not in operation.

(b) and (c) Airports are closed because none of the airlines are operating any flights to those locations. It is entirely for the airlines to decide whether they would operate their flights to any particular airport. Airports Authority will provide the necessary facilities for safe operation to such airports. During the last 3 years, four airports at Akola, Hubli, Kota and Gaya have been made operational.

[English]

#### **World Bank Project at Sunderbans, West Bengal**

6329. SHRI SAMIK LAHIRI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government propose to develop Sundarbans; West Bengal with the assistance of World Bank;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the tourism related project is likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): (a) to (c) The Department of Tourism does not have any proposal to seek the assistance of World Bank for the development of tourism in Sundarbans. However, the Department of Tourism sanctioned central financial assistance amounting to Rs. 200.44 lakhs for various projects in Sundarbans.

#### **Computerised Reservation Facilities**

6330. SHRI ANCHAL DAS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps being taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to provide computerised Railway reservation facilities in easily accessible towns of rural areas of the country to save the money and time of the people; and